

Mississippi 2001 Report

Natural Resources Conservation Service



**Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service**

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Dear Mississippians,

I am proud to present this 2001 annual report which highlights the conservation of Mississippi's natural resources.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. Since 1935 NRCS (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) has offered technical assistance and guidance to help private landowners conserve, develop, and wisely use their soil, water, and related natural resources on a voluntary, non-regulatory basis. We work with land users, groups, and units of government to reduce soil erosion, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve water quality, promote good land use, reduce flooding, and improve woodland and pasture conditions.

As you read through this publication, you will see examples of partnership in action. We are proud to work with Mississippi's 82 soil and water conservation districts, the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts, and other numerous agencies and organizations.

The success stories being shared by those who use our technical assistance are numerous and rewarding.

I want to thank the many NRCS and district employees, customers, partners, legislators and landowners for helping make these conservation efforts possible.

Sincerely,

Homer L. Wilkes
State Conservationist

NRCS Mission

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

NRCS Vision

A Productive Nation in Harmony with a Quality Environment

"EQIPed" to Stop Soil Erosion

NRCS in Mississippi is helping farmers stop soil erosion in a cost-effective manner in Yalobusha County. Landowner Coley Bailey and his father grow a lot of cotton in the hill section of northeast Mississippi. Soil erosion can be challenging and is serious for the Bailey's. Planting no-till is one method that helps with erosion, but doesn't solve all of the problems. EQIP has helped the Baileys deal with some serious erosion problems by providing cost share on five drop pipe structures that slow down water-thus preventing erosion and improving water quality.

One structure on the Bailey farm provided by EQIP on a 50-acre tract of land prevents up to 8 acres of land from having erosion problems. Three other drop pipes provided by EQIP are also stopping erosion on 30 acres

"If you want to keep farming, you want to do what's right for the land," according to Bailey. "The cost share that I have to pay is not much, considering what this conservation practice does for the land." He adds, "It's not a large price to pay, and you will get your return back of about 10 or 12 bales of cotton."

According to Jerry Griffin, NRCS district conservationist, the Bailey land is located in an important large watershed, draining into the Grenada lake reservoir. "Controlling the erosion on this land, is keeping sediment out of our streams draining into the reservoir and is also addressing water quality problems."

Bailey is proud of what he and his father have been able to do through the NRCS and the EQIP program to improve the land they farm. To them it is a long-term investment. "If we had to continue to farm before EQIP was available, and not address the needs, the land was going to wash away. We hope to be here for a long time and continue farming this land," states Bailey.



Jerry Griffin, district conservationist and farmer Coley L. Bailey of Yalobusha County inspect a soil conservation "drop pipe" which was installed on Bailey's farmland.

NRCS employees serve all 82 counties across the state. Staffs are made up of district conservationists, soil conservationists, soil conservation technicians, soil scientists, engineers, biologists, foresters and other specialists. These employees work hand-in-hand with land users to conserve natural resources on private lands.

Program Summary

This annual report covers one fiscal year, from October 1, 2000 to September 30, 2001. In a few cases, to show trends, data from other years is included. The following are highlights of our annual activities.

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL-566)

During 2001, approximately \$5.5 million of financial assistance provided in PL-566. This assistance included channel stabilization on Sowashee Gallagher Creek (2 contracts), bank stabilization on Chiwapa and Persimmon-Burnt Corn (8). Other work included Town Creek-FWRS No. 39, S. Delta (3) Cont'd-Channel E. Tallahaga-W Prong GCS, Choctaw Sewer Treatment and Richland CK.-grade control structure repair.

Approximately \$500,000 financial assistance was provided through PL-534 from NRCS. This included Piney Creek (4) pipes and bank stabilization and Little Tippah/Chili pipes. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided \$500,000 financial assistance to contract work on Yalobusha River for grade stabilization structure pipes (15 sites) and Batupan Bogue (Perry Creek)-drop inlets.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI)

NRCS is committed to progress in the discipline of grazing land conservation technical assistance through a coordinated partnership with the Mississippi Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Coalition. The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Program's primary focus has been the implementation and installation of 42 livestock efficiency demonstration farms showing best management practices in forage and livestock production. These practices focus on soil and water conservation and serve as teaching tools for neighboring landowners. In 2001, these farms provided a learning environment for more than 1,400 landowners, NRCS employees and other agency employees. There were 103,849 acres of prescribed grazing land planned with 113,331 acres applied.

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

RC&D is a unique USDA program to help rural areas promote wise use of natural resources, make community improvement or stimulate economic development. NRCS administers the program providing a coordinator and administrative support. A local council of citizens sets their own priorities.

Mississippi currently has seven RC&D areas. Coordinators for the new Coastal Plains Area and North Central (due to retirement) were selected during the last

quarter for FY 2001. A total of 77 projects were completed statewide. All projects were funded by grants and other outside funding sources.

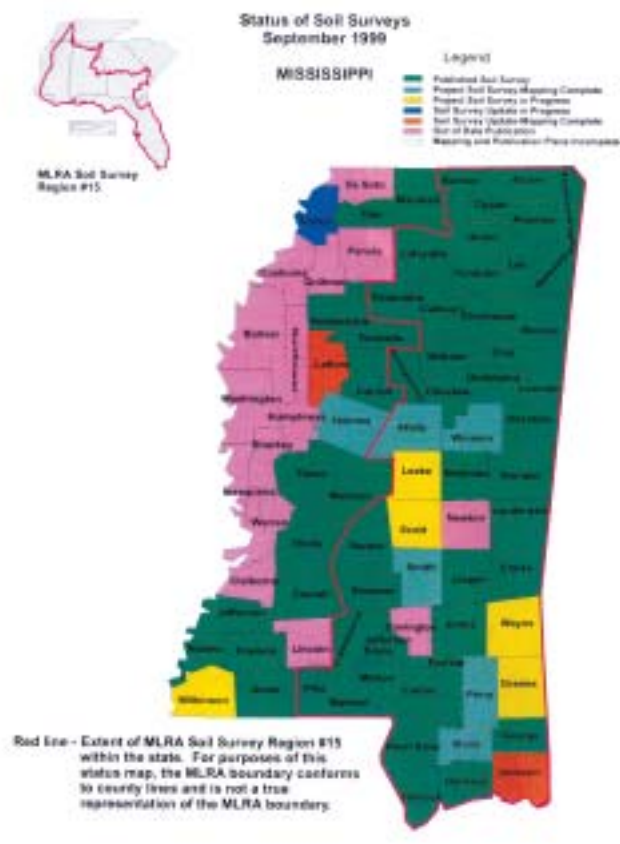
The mission of the Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center (PMC) is to develop, test, and transfer effective plant science technology to meet customer and resource needs. In working with a broad range of native grasses, forbs, trees, and shrubs, the PMC seeks to address priority needs of field offices and land managers in both the public and private sectors.

During FY 2001, the PMC released a shrub willow for streambank erosion control called Morton Germplasm. The PMC assisted over 400 customers including 56 cooperators.

Soil Surveys

Currently, modern soil surveys are available in 53 of the 82 counties in Mississippi. Fieldwork has been completed in eight counties and surveys are awaiting publication. Progressive soil surveys are being conducted in five counties and an updated survey is underway in one county. Fifteen counties have an out of date (or out of print) soil survey.

Sixteen counties in Mississippi are SSURGO certified, meeting all the standards and specifications as described in the National Soil Survey Handbook. Six



Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)

Mississippi obligated approximately \$1.8 million in the EWP program funds during FY 2001 to repair damages from severe erosion due to heavy rains and remove debris left by a tornado. The majority of these damages occurred in 13 counties across the State. Work was completed on the April 2000, November 2000, January 2001 severe rain storms, and February 2001 tornado/heavy rain storms.

1996 Farm Bill Programs

The 1996 Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act (1996 Farm Bill) authorized the continuation of some conservation programs and gave us new ones to help meet conservation needs.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

In FY 2001 no general signup was held, but interest in the program is still strong. The continuous signup option has resulted in an additional 972 contracts on 16,489 acres this fiscal year. The practices are typically buffers consisting of riparian areas and filter strips. This brings the total number of active CRP contracts to 16,981 on 859,681 acres in Mississippi.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to farmers and landowners to address their natural resources concerns. Funds are distributed in locally developed priority areas or towards statewide resource concerns. In 2001, Mississippi had 18 priority areas and 5 statewide concerns.

Last year Mississippi received approximately \$4.2 million EQIP funds. The statewide and priority areas resulted in 1,586 applications resulted in 697 conservation plans and accompanying contracts.

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)

The Forestry Incentives Program began in 1972 and focused primarily on Southeastern States. It is the most popular environmental planting program in history and the most "farmer friendly" of all USDA programs.

In 2001, 440 landowners received \$620,373 for tree planting on acreage through the FIP program. In addition, 9,800 acres were planted to trees.

Engineering

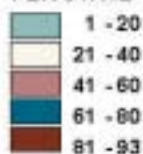
Pilot Rehabilitation Projects in Mississippi will be under construction soon. Hubbard Murphree Site 74 is out for bids and Sites 72 & 73 are being designed with construction planned for the spring 2002. Shammack Creek in Lauderdale County, Second Creek in Adams County, and Black Creek in Holmes County are being planned and designed for construction during the year of 2002. Each of these dam sites will be redesigned based on current safety criteria and flood-controlling features will be enhanced. These structures total more than 2.4 million dollars of assistance to this effort.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

In 2001, NRCS was not allocated new WHIP cost-share funds. However 31 new contracts on 1,557 acres in the amount of \$75,202 were funded with reallocated WHIP funds from 1999. These funds will be used to implement wildlife conservation practices. These practices will create and manage wildlife habitat, shallow water wetland habitat and habitat for declining species.

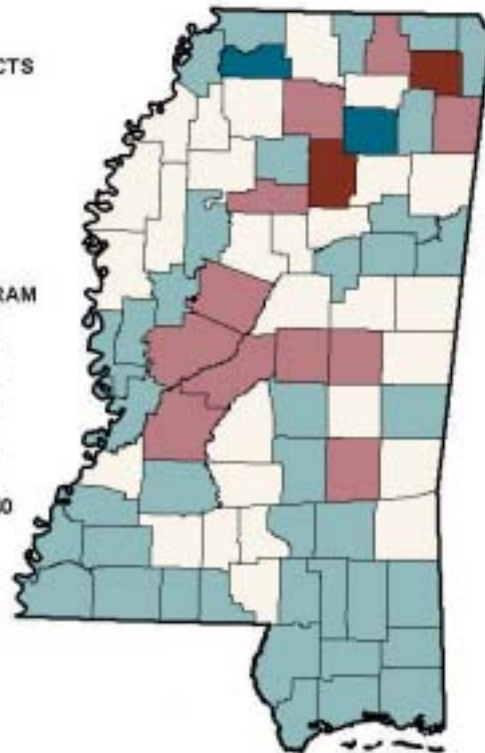
Conservation Program Contracts for 2001

NUMBER CONTRACTS PER STATE



TOTAL PER PROGRAM

EQIP	704
FIP	443
WHIP	284
CRP	649
WRP	31
SWCA	29
TOTAL	2,140



Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

Since the 1992 WRP Pilot Program, there have been 269 easements enrolled in Mississippi, encompassing 103,105 acres. Mississippi has the second largest enrollment of WRP acres in the nation. Because the program is so popular with landowners, applications are backlogged on more than 37,000 acres. Since 1992, reforestation of WRP bottomland forests has been completed on approximately 77,000 acres using direct-seeding techniques and planting of bare-root seedlings. Additionally, hydrology restoration enhancement measures have been completed on approximately 15,000 acres. Currently, working through partnerships, NRCS is restoring an estimated 10,000 acres of wildlife habitat annually.

In 2001, WRP funding allocations of \$9.5 million will enable: the enrollment of 32 farms on 8,668 acres and the restoration of 12,000 acres on 30 farms.